

David Bennett

NCSS Presentation: November 15, 2003

## **Application of the Principles of the Constitution - Grade Level: 10-12, college prep or above**

### **Purpose:**

1. This assignment should come at the end of your Constitutional unit. Depending upon the academic level of the students, this assessment exercise should allow you, the teacher, to evaluate your students' level of understanding in regards to four main principles of the Constitution. By completing this project, your students should be able to demonstrate a solid understanding of the four main principles upon which the Constitution was founded, by applying what is happening, or recently has happened in the world around them.
2. Time Frame: 2 days allotted for school based research;  
2-3 days for presentation

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to improve their analytical and research skills by applying their knowledge in designing a class presentation that demonstrates the Constitution's four main principles. (synthesis)
2. Students will be able to examine and interpret researched information from actual every day political and social events/happenings connecting these to the Constitution's four main principles. (evaluation)
3. Students will be able to collect, summarize, and explain this information in a class presentation. (knowledge, comprehension and application)

### **Steps:**

1. As you teach the Constitution, present to the students the following four principles of the Constitution:
  - A. Federalism
  - B. Separation of Powers with Checks and Balances
  - C. Protection of Individual Liberties (Those contained in the original Constitution and the Bill of Rights )
  - D. Adaptability/Flexibility

2. Allow sufficient time with your students to explore these principles. At Barnstable High School most teachers allow two-three weeks to examine/investigate the Constitution.
3. Explain to students as you present and discuss each principle, that a concluding assessment will be a portfolio assignment which will require them to produce a project surrounding these principles.
4. When you feel that you have sufficiently covered this material, explain to the students that they will be evaluated on their application and connection of these four principles to actual events that are occurring or have occurred around them in government and society. Pass out the explanation sheet for the project.
5. Allow students to be creative in doing this project. For example, allow them to create newspapers, radio interviews combined with posters, desk displays, political cartoons, etc. Brainstorm with students how they can do this project.
6. Establish rubrics for the presentations. You may want to use exemplary, superior, satisfactory and needs improvement.
  - A. Exemplary projects would include at least three to four written examples of each principle, with a well developed summary and well developed explanatory connection to the principle involved. It would be creative, neat, and the student presentation would demonstrate a clear understanding of the connection. The presentation should be the best example of each principle.
  - B. Superior Projects would include at least two to three written examples with the same criteria as above for the summary, explanatory connection, creativity, neatness and presentation.
  - C. Satisfactory Projects would include two written examples of each principle with a developed summary and connection, limited creativity, neatness and presentation.
  - D. Needs improvement would include one written example of each, with an underdeveloped summary and connection, very limited creativity, and a poor presentation.

**Student Handout****Assignment Summary:**

According to many, the American educational system is in a crisis situation. Historians and pundits alike have criticized the public schools for failing to teach basic fundamental historical content and facts. They point to recent polls as proof that young people today lack any knowledge of the Constitution and how it applies to their lives. The nation is divided on this issue and the major networks have asked your history class to be interviewed about these claims. Now, you know that you have spent the last three weeks in history class studying the Constitution and its principles. It wasn't easy but you know who the Founding Fathers were, why they wrote the Constitution, all of its articles, the Bill of Rights and the powers that the government has, plus what it can do and not do. You have decided that you will organize the class and create a presentation on the four main principles of the Constitution. You're sure that the major TV networks will be impressed and you hope you can alleviate any fears the rest of the nation has in the ability of public school students today. You're tired of the criticism and misinformation that has been spread. As a future lawyer, politician and leader you are going to strive to eradicate these false impressions. You know you can present to the nation a well thought out presentation that will demonstrate the four principles of the Constitution!

**Purpose:**

You want to make sure that you have a solid understanding of the Constitution, especially the principles of federalism, separation of powers with checks and balances, protection of individual rights, and adaptability. In order to evaluate this knowledge, it behooves you to connect these principles to the world around you. Therefore you will be researching and presenting in groups of two, a project based assessment of these principles. This project will include knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The objectives are:

1. To improve your analytical and research skills by applying knowledge in designing a class presentation that demonstrates the Constitution's four main principles. (synthesis)
2. To examine and interpret researched information from actual every day political and social events/happenings, connecting these to the Constitution's four main principles. (evaluation)
3. To collect, summarize, and explain this information in a class presentation. (knowledge, comprehension and application)

**Your Role:**

You will act as a facilitator and organizer. You will be a member of a group that will create a presentation for the mass media.

**Audience:**

All those that watch the major networks for news and information, all the talk show hosts across the nation and those who doubt the ability of the nation's youth.

**Format:**

Class presentation that could be video taped and/or photographed.

**Focus Correction Areas:**

1. Exemplary projects would include at least three to four written examples of each principle, with a well developed summary and well developed explanatory connection to the principle involved. Your presentation should be creative and neat and it should include your best example of each principle. It should demonstrate a clear understanding of the connection.
2. Superior Projects would include at least two to three written examples with the same criteria as above for the summary, explanatory connection, creativity, neatness and presentation.
3. Satisfactory Projects would include two written examples of each principle with a developed summary and connection, limited creativity, neatness and presentation.
4. Needs improvement would include one written example of each with an underdeveloped summary and connection, very limited creativity, and a poor presentation.

### **Scoring for Rubrics:**

1. Format – creativity, neatness, clarity of presentation , number of examples  
16 possible examples: 1/2 pt. each      total: 8 pts  
creativity etc.:                      16 pts.                      total: 32 pts.
2. Content summary  
16 possible: 2 pts. each                      total: 32 pts.
3. Content analysis, synthesis, evaluation of examples  
16 possible: 5 pts. each                      total: 80 pts.
3. Prediction – logical and sound inference  
16 possible: 3 pts. each                      total: 48 pts.

**Total points: 200**

### **Procedure:**

1. Review all your information on the four principles
2. Research in the library, on the net and other media sources
3. Brainstorm a list of ideas that you can do for the project
4. Find someone besides your partner to review your idea and get his/her opinion
5. Compile information referenced to the worksheet below titled Application of the Four Principles of the Constitution
6. Outline your idea and ok it with the teacher
7. Gather the materials necessary for your presentation.
8. Decide who will present what, and create a list of questions you should answer to demonstrate application, connection and importance
9. Check your FCAs
10. Complete your project by \_\_\_\_\_

## The Application of the Four Principles of the Constitution

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Principle: \_\_\_\_\_

Material /Article Researched:

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Source Referenced \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Explanation of how this event connects to the Constitution's principles.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Prediction: How might above information affect you in the future?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Example of Application Sheet

Name: John Tucker Carlson III

H-U.S. History

**Constitutional Principle:** Separation of Powers with Checks and Balances and Protection of Individual Liberties

**Source Referenced:** Cape Cod Times October 24, 2003

**Summary:** Ms. Nancy Rider of West Dennis, Massachusetts has written a letter to the editor explaining her concern about how the Patriot Act has provided the government tremendous powers that can violate the traditional concept of due process. She particularly refers to how this act upsets the balance of power established by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution. She implies that all citizens should be concerned about this act and its possible misuse.

**Connection:** The Founding Fathers were concerned about the misuse of government power towards its own citizens. They remembered how the king had persecuted anyone who disagreed with his rule. Therefore they were concerned that no one branch receive too much power and that the rights of individuals be protected from unfair search and seizure. Under the Patriot Act, the executive branch of government could misuse the investigative power granted under the Patriot Act. They could accuse people of being terrorists, lock them up and question them for unspecified amounts of time without a hearing in court. Additionally their homes and personal possessions could be searched and/or seized.

**Prediction:** Even though I support the Patriot Act, I could see how law enforcement officials might misuse it. As Ms. Reider suggests, it might not happen to me but I should be aware of any misuse so that, if necessary, I could contact my congressman to change this law.